

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 08570 210955Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5289

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 8570

FOR NEA/EGY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SCUL EG
SUBJ: HOVING CONTROVERSY WITH MININFO

REF: STATE 115725

1. HARRISON BRIEFED ME MAY 19 ON STATUS OF PROBLEM AND ASKED MY ADVICE. I RECOMMENDED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HOVING TO COME AS SCHEDULED NEXT WEEK BECAUSE HE HAS NOT YET MET MINISTER AL SAWI AND IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HOVING TO EXPLAIN PERSONALLY THE PAST AND CONTEMPLATED FUTURE METROPOLITAN-MOIC RELATIONSHIP TO HIM. I ALSO SUGGESTED HARRISON CONSIDER EXPLAINING FACTS TO UNDERSECRETARY ARABY, HOPING TO PERSUADE ARABY TO BE HELPFUL IN MATTER. HARRISON HAS UP TO NOW DEALT SOLELY WITH MUKHTAR'S OFFICE ON THESE MATTERS. HARRISON SAID HE WOULD SEE ARABY MAY 21.

2. REFTEL ACCOUNT OF EVENTS BASICALLY SAME BUT DIFFERS IN SOME DETAILS FROM HARRISON'S STORY. FIRST, MOIC HAS NOT ISSUED "PRESS RELEASES" ON MATTER BUT DAILY NEWSPAPER AL GUMHURIA DID PRINT STORIES BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM MOIC OFFICIAL, PRESUMABLY ARABY. (FIRST ARTICLE SAID MET PROJECTS CANCELLED BY MOIC, US FIRM HAD GOTTEN TOO MUCH MONEY FOR
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MUSEUM CLEAN-UP, AND MOIC USING THE \$1 MILLION DONATED BY MRS. WALLACE. SECOND ARTICLE MAY 17 SAID MOIC ORDERED OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION INTO PAYMENT OF \$8000 MONTHLY TO AN AMERICAN EXPERT.) SECOND, MUKHTAR DID CONTRACT WITH PRITCHARD AND SONS IN MID-FEBRUARY FOR 6-WEEK START-UP PROJECT COSTING OVER \$25,000 TO CLEAN EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, THEN ASKED PRITCHARD TO

EXTEND CONTRACT FOR TWO AND THEN SIX MONTHS AT TOTAL COST OF \$8000 MONTHLY. HOWEVER BARBAGALLO'S OWN SALARY WAS UNDER \$900 MONTHLY AND MUKHTAR CANCELLED PROJECT ON MAY 15 AND HAS NOT RESUMED IT. INCIDENTALLY, PRITCHARD MAY HAVE UK OFFICE BUT IT IS KNOWN HERE AS SWISS COMPANY, AND BARBAGALLO IS EGYPTIAN-BORN INDIVIDUAL THOUGHT TO BE GREEK CITIZEN.

3. I WILL SEE AL SAWI ON MATTER AFTER HE RETURNS FROM TRIP TO KHARTOUM O/A MAY 30. I WOULD DO SO SIMPLY TO HEAR HIS VERSION OF STORY, AND TO EXPRESS CONCERN THAT ERRONEOUS PRESS ACCOUNTS MAY BE TARNISHING WHAT HAS UP TO NOW BEEN A CASE OF HARMONIOUS US-EGYPTIAN CULTURAL COOPERATION SEEN BY THE PUBLIC AS BENEFITING BOTH SIDES AND DAMAGING EXCELLENT RELATIONS BOTH HAVE HAD WITH METROPOLITAN MUSEUM. I PLAN TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH HARRISON TO HEAR HOW HIS MEETING WITH ARABY GOES. AS TO HOVING TRIP, THAT IS OF COURSE UP TO HIM, BUT DO BELIEVE HE SHOULD TALK TO MINISTER ABOUT PROBLEM ASAP. IF HE CAME BY MAY 26, HE WOULD BE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN REOPENING OF USIS AMERICAN CENTER AT WHICH LOAN COLLECTION OF TUTANKHAMON REPLICAS WILL BE DISPLAYED. HOPEFULLY THAT OCCASION WILL EVOKE FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR TUT EXHIBIT.
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